

WASHINGTON - U.S. Rep. Ed Pastor, D-Ariz., released the following statement today on his decision to vote in support of the national health care reform bill, H.R. 3590, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act:

"My decision to vote in support of this legislation was one of the most difficult and most important decisions I have made in my Congressional career," Pastor said. "Health care reform has been a priority of mine since I was first elected to Congress. Accordingly, I introduced legislation in a previous Congress stating that health care is a right, not a privilege, and I continue to believe this." Pastor outlined the benefits the proposed health care reform legislation would have on the Fourth Congressional District.

"The bill improves access and affordability of health care for 270,000 uninsured individuals in Arizona's Fourth Congressional District by creating a state-based health insurance exchange where individuals and small businesses can buy insurance plans. Among numerous other improvements, it offers tax credits and subsidies to help uninsured low-income and middle-class Arizonans purchase a health care plan. It reduces the Medicare prescription drug donut hole and provides free preventive care services for beneficiaries. Additionally, the bill invests significantly in Community Health Centers and training programs for doctors, nurses and other health care providers to ensure access."

"Although this piece of legislation is not perfect, it addresses what would otherwise be disastrous for all Americans in the near future by reducing the spiraling cost of health care, removing lifetime caps and pre-existing condition clauses, preventing companies from dropping your coverage if you get sick or discrimination based on gender, and increasing competition among health insurance companies."

"I respect the position many individuals deeply hold on this issue and I strongly encourage constituents to seek information from a variety of reliable sources to understand how national health care reform would impact specific circumstances," Pastor concluded.